

The Colonist.

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THE INTERESTS OF MANITOBA
AND THE TERRITORIES.

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FARMING CONDITIONS IN MANITOBA.

The Manitoba farmer is a very much advised person at present, almost too much advised if anything, for from among the babble of voices and the multitude of advisers it is hard to distinguish which have the true ring, which the real merit. The primary reason for this wholesale tendering of advice is that the results of the farming operations of the province are not as satisfactory as could be wished, two unsatisfactory years, combined with the exceptionally low prices, having brought those engaged in that pursuit into a condition in which money is scarce, and strict economy has to be practiced that ends may be made to meet. To mention those engaged in the pursuit of agriculture is to imply almost everybody in the province, as Manitoba is as yet distinctly an agricultural province, and all classes of its people are more or less dependent upon that industry for a living; if anything happens the crops everybody eats it. In this case, although the stringency has been caused largely by forces wholly beyond the control of man, and is, in fact, more sympathetic than anything else, the farmer is being put through a course of lectures on what to do to increase his income and insure himself against any repetition of the present trouble. Before going further we might say, for the benefit of our old country readers, who may not be familiar with the real condition, and who may think that by reading between the lines of what we have already said they can detect a shadow of something which shows that Manitoba is not the country it is "cracked up" to be, or that farming in this province is not such a successful industry as immigration agents make it out, that there is no such hidden meaning to what we have said, because that is not the case. The conditions and prospects of the Manitoba farmer to day are better and brighter than those of any other farmer in the wide world. The only trouble is that the farming operations of the province are too confined, and the industry is not as fully developed as it might be. While we can, year after year, raise large crops of the finest wheat in the world, too much of the attention of the farmer is given to that cereal, and not enough to other lines of work. Therein lies the whole secret of the trouble. While the province should and will, we hope, never relax its efforts to keep up the standard of its grain, more attention will have to be given to the sister industries of stock raising and dairy-

ing before we shall have reached a state of true and lasting prosperity. It is hardly necessary now to go into figures and comparisons to show that mixed farming should be adopted in Manitoba—the subject has been treated in that way time and again—but we can roughly mention ways in which our farmers can materially increase their income.

Principal among the neglected industries is that of hog raising. It has been shown that by feeding his poorer grades of grain, for which there is at present no profitable market, to hogs the farmer could make it yield him bushel for bushel, a higher price than he has been paid this year for his very best wheat. And this has been shown not by any arithmetical juggling, but by actual, practical experiment, carried on under no more advantageous circumstances than would attend the operations of the ordinary farmer. And if this single item of hog raising was tested by the farmer himself, it would be found that the distribution of the work would be such that very little additional expense or trouble would be incurred. Then there is the item of poultry. Manitoba imports yearly large quantities of poultry for local consumption, and the money sent out of the province in this way might just as well be kept at home and an export trade established instead. Cattle, horses and sheep would likewise all yield large returns were attention given them. In dairy products Manitoba might easily build up for herself a large and lucrative trade in a few years by a careful fostering of the industry. If it were necessary we could go on multiplying arguments in favor of mixed farming, *ad infinitum*, but it is not because the fact is already admitted by everybody that it is the only system that can be followed with true success.

A few years hence, when the province has something like an adequate population, and all its vacant lands are occupied, it will be a matter of wonder to the old settlers when they see what an income the province has from exports of stock and dairy products why they ever confined themselves so long to raising wheat.

OUR VACANT LANDS.

Two enterprises are now on hand which are of great importance to Manitoba, and particularly to the eastern portion of the province and the city of Winnipeg. This refers in the first place to the vacant lands in the Winnipeg district, and secondly, to the question of carrying out a comprehensive system of drainage for eastern Manitoba. Those who come to Manitoba for the first time, wonder at the great area of vacant land in the eastern part of the province, especially in the Winnipeg district. The advantages of farming near a large city are so well known, that people wonder at the great area of vacant land observed in coming into the city from either the south, east or west. The conclusion is often erroneously arrived at, that these lands cannot be as valuable as other parts of the province, or they would be settled upon. In fact, the impression has gone abroad that these lands are not choice quality, largely on account of the sparsity of settlement. It is reasoned in this way: Why would settlers pass by eastern

Manitoba to locate in more remote sections were it not to secure better land?

There is one feature which is to some extent an objection to settlement in eastern Manitoba and portions of the Winnipeg district, namely, the greater need of drainage here than in most other parts of the province. The country is mostly very level, and the soil is heavier, thus necessitating drainage more largely than in the districts having lighter soils and more rolling surface. But when it comes to richness of soil, the Red river valley may fairly be awarded the palm. It is simply of unequalled richness, and will stand cropping, year after year, without artificial fertilizing, to such an extent as to fairly amaze those not familiar with its wonderful fertility. The level nature of the country is an advantage in one respect, namely, the exceedingly limited area of waste land. In an uneven or broken country there is always more or less of this, but in the Red river valley there are farms of hundreds of acres, every part of which could be plowed up. The low spots are about the only impediment to the plow, and these afford excellent hay or grazing land. There is no part of Manitoba which gives a larger crop of natural prairie hay than the Red river valley country, making it a favorite district for stock.

The principal reason why there is so much vacant land in the Winnipeg district is owing to the fact that much of the land fell into the hands of speculators. When Manitoba first became a portion of the Dominion of Canada, and the country was opened up to settlement, a spirit of speculation in lands at once developed. It was expected that the country would go ahead fast, and that lands would rapidly increase in value. Speculators therefore soon got hold of large quantities of land at the merely nominal value then placed upon it by the natives, and they naturally selected the lands adjacent to the Red and Assiniboine rivers, in proximity to the settlements then existing in the country. These lands did rapidly increase in value when population began to flow in, but this very fact defeated the object of the speculators, as, owing to the high price placed upon the lands, settlers went farther west where they were able to secure free government land. Thus the tide of settlement was directed into other districts. Another feature which perhaps turned some settlers away from the eastern districts, was owing to the fact that the early tide of settlement arrived during a series of excessively wet years, at which time the country appeared to the worst advantage. During the drier years which have been the rule since that time, the level nature of the country has not been so much of a drawback.

The question of undertaking a comprehensive system of drainage for eastern Manitoba is now engaging the attention of the provincial government. A number of government drains have been cut, but no general system of drainage has yet been undertaken. The government, it is understood, will have a survey and topographical map prepared at once, with a view to carrying out a comprehensive system of drainage. With this accomplished, the value of the lands of eastern Manitoba will be greatly enhanced, and much land which is now rather too wet in certain seasons for successful cultivation, will be placed